

Preface

Lack of sanitation is one of the single biggest challenges being faced by the world today. This silent global crisis constitutes an affront to human dignity on a massive scale causing widespread damage to human health and child survival prospects; social misery especially for the women, the elderly and for the sick; depressed economic productivity and human development; and pollution to the living environment and water resources. The United Nations declared 2008 to be the International Year of Sanitation. This gives us a vital opportunity to bring sanitation to the front of everyone's minds. Simultaneously from studies across the globe it has also been realized that women's lives are closely connected to and affected by sanitation as well as the use of and access to water resources. In rural areas, women have primary responsibility for management of water supply, sanitation and health at the household level. Water is necessary not only for drinking but also for food production and preparation, care of domestic animals, personal hygiene, care of the sick, cleaning, washing and waste disposal. All these activities in most cultures are largely undertaken by women. Against this backdrop, the researcher has conducted an in-depth study in Birbhum district of West Bengal with a major focus to explore the role of women in promotion and management of rural sanitation.

The thesis is divided into six chapters. The first chapter of the thesis i.e. 'Introduction' discusses about the concept of sanitation and with the help of available recent statistics and data shows significance of sanitation in terms the deadly effects that the global community experience due poor or lack of sanitation. It also provides an overview regarding the current status of sanitation across the globe as well as in India.

In the second chapter i.e. 'Literature review' - for gaining better understanding on the research topic, the researcher reviewed a wide range of literatures including books, journals, recent reports, case studies, web-based materials, working papers etc. related to sanitation, for the present study. The academic literature landscape is varied in its focus which includes - the economic significance of sanitation, the intersection between gender and specifically women's involvement in sanitation and water and hygiene related activities. Keeping in view the different aspects of sanitation, covered by the researcher while reviewing sanitation related literature - the chapter is divided under the following broad heads:

- Why Sanitation is so important? : Understanding the Economic Significance and Benefits of Sanitation*
- Sanitation and the Need of Gender Mainstreaming*
- The Need of Looking at Sanitation Policies and Approaches from Gender-Lens*
- Need for Inclusion of Women within Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Sector*
- Role of gender in Water Resource Management*
- Studies conducted on 'willingness to pay' (WTP) factor for improved water supply and sanitation*
- Some Other Recent Studies on Sanitation*

The third chapter of this thesis i.e. 'Methodology' as its title connotes, provides a detail outline of the entire methodology of the study which includes description of universe, rationale of the study, research design, sources of data, sampling procedure, tools used for data collection and procedure of data analysis.

The fourth chapter i.e. 'data analysis, Interpretation and discussion of findings' provides a careful analysis of the entire data collected from different categories of respondents in order to draw findings for the different objectives of the present study.

Keeping in view the major focus of the current study i.e. the role of women in promotion sanitation – the researcher in the fifth chapter of this thesis titled 'role of women in promotion and management of sanitation: reflections from global evidences – makes a concerted effort to explore the significance of women's role in sanitation-promoting initiatives, citing evidences of several case studies and best practices from across the Globe.

The last chapter of the thesis i.e. 'Summary of the Study and Conclusion' provides a gist of the entire research work - which includes rationale of the present study, a brief overview of data-collection and data-analysis procedure and highlights the major findings of the study.

From this research, it may be concluded that though by tradition, Indian society and culture values personal hygiene but gives little importance to clean and healthy community environment. Human excreta is regarded as the most hated object and anything connected with latrine is considered so defiling that one is supposed to take a bath immediately after coming out of the toilet and before going into kitchen- due to psychological and religious taboos. Sanitation is, therefore, regarded as a matter of individual initiative and not a collective obligation of the community. Against this socio-cultural backdrop, rural sanitation and particularly the agenda of encouraging women's participation in sanitation promotion and management has not been provided due attention.